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Recommended Citation

Center for Persons With Disabilities, "Eunice Kennedy Shriver: a World Advocate for People With Disabilities" (2009). *Blog Posts*. 75.

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EUNICE KENNEDY SHRIVER: A WORLD ADVOCATE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

August 17, 2009 by cpehrson

One of the greatest advocates for people with disabilities has left this world a better place to live because of her dedication, her passion, and her determination that people with disabilities have rights.

In her words, they have earned it all: "The right to play on any playing field? You have earned it. The right to study in any school? You have earned it. The right to hold a job? You have earned it. The right to be anyone's neighbor? You have earned it."

Founded by Eunice Shriver in the 1960's, the Special Olympics had over 3.1 million persons with disabilities participate in 228 Games in 170 nations. Michael Gamel-McCormick, PhD, President of AUCD, mourned the loss of one of the most important advocates for persons with disabilities that the nation has known. "Mrs. Shriver was the essence of advocacy and service. To watch her at a Special Olympics event was to see someone who fully valued the lives of persons with developmental disabilities and who valued their full potential as well. Her greatness was and will remain that she changed the way much of the country, much of the world, viewed persons with intellectual disabilities." The Special Olympics has grown into the largest, most important sports movement in history.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan presented Eunice Kennedy Shriver with the President's Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian award for public service.

Chicago mayor, Richard Daley, stated after the first Special Olympics Games were held in Chicago in 1968, "The world will never be the same after this."

He was right. Eunice Kennedy Shriver has forever changed the way that the world looks at people with disabilities. Thank you, Mrs. Shriver, for leading the way for the rest of us.